Preface

The study of Roman drama has been largely confined to the completely surviving works of Plautus, Terence and Seneca. Interesting and important as these are, the understanding and appreciation of Roman drama and its development over the centuries of its existence will increase when these plays are seen in context. Facilitating this and returning Roman drama as a whole to a wider audience is the purpose of this anthology.

It provides a basic introduction to the essentials of Roman drama as well as a selection of representative dramatic texts, including extracts from tragedy (crepidata), comedy (palliata), praetexta, togata and mime from both the Republican and imperial periods. Additionally, there is a selection of key testimonia to the background of Roman theatre with particular reference to the Republican period, since in the absence of complete texts for some dramatic genres and of other contemporary evidence, these testimonia acquire great significance, but are all too often neglected or inaccessible. A final (very selective) section on the reception of Roman drama by poets in England, from 'the first English comedy' to the twentieth century, allows glimpses into how Roman drama continues to influence the European dramatic tradition. All texts are provided in the original language and in English translation; technical discussions are omitted. Therefore the book should be particularly useful for students and teachers (ways of exploring the topic further are indicated in the bibliography).

So it remains to hope that this book will be as enjoyable for readers using it as it has been for the author writing it and that it will contribute to making an interesting and important area of Roman literature more widely known. Warmest thanks are due to Matthew Robinson, Niall Slater and Kathryn Tempest, who all took the time during busy periods to read through an entire draft of the book and saved me from a number of embarrassing errors and infelicities. Deborah Blake at Duckworth has enthusiastically supported this project from the beginning and ensured its timely and beautiful production; individuals, publishers and institutions have kindly granted permission for reprints or reproductions: I am grateful to everyone involved.

London, September 2009   G.M.

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Notes for the Reader

Introduction

Since the introduction is intended to convey basic background information necessary for reading and understanding the texts that form the body of this book, it does not have footnotes or numerous references to primary and secondary sources. Further details can be found with the help the bibliography (at the end of the volume), which is divided into thematic sections. There are, however, references to passages to primary texts included in this anthology if these illustrate or provide evidence for a particular issue (for the format see below on 'References').

Latin texts

The Latin texts printed in this anthology are based on the standard editions in the Oxford Classical Texts or Bibliotheca Teubneriana series for authors whose writings have been preserved in their entirety (with slight modifications where necessary). The text of the dramatic fragments is based on the third edition of Otto Ribbeck's collections of the comic and tragic fragments (1897/98), still the only comprehensive edition of all dramatic fragments; this has been compared with more recent editions where they are available (and adapted where appropriate). The numbering of the fragments in Ribbeck's third edition [R.³] and in Warmington's Loeb edition [W.] is given for the convenience of readers; more recent editions (see bibliography) typically include concordances. For these references the various dramatic genres are indicated by the abbreviations of their names (*Trag[oedia]*, *Praet[exta]*, *Com[oedia]*, *Tog[ata]*, *Mim[us]*); fragments not explicitly attributed to a specific author and/or work in the transmission are designated as *Incerta* (*Inc.* or *Inc. inc.*), even if here they may be assigned to a particular play for other reasons.

Although establishing the text is notoriously difficult in the case of fragments, the generally accepted and/or most plausible version of the Latin has been printed and a textual apparatus has been omitted, since the purpose of this book is to facilitate reading and appreciating these dramatic texts rather than the discussion of technical questions, which can be found elsewhere. Where major changes to the transmitted texts have been adopted, these are marked in the Latin (by [ ] for deletions and

< > for additions); deleted words have not been translated, supplemented ones have been included in the English version without any indication. Where problems in the Latin texts have been suspected and no satisfactory solutions have been proposed so far, this has also been indicated (by † for uncertain text and * for possible lacunae); an approximate sense is rendered in the English version.

English translations

All English translations are new translations by the author. They aim at being sufficiently idiomatic to be read on their own, but still sufficiently close to the original text to provide guidance to understanding the Latin.

Commentary

There is no separate section of commentary on the texts assembled in this book, but the brief introductions to each extract provide the necessary background. And a few factual clarifications (short ones included within square brackets in the English translations and longer ones placed below the Latin or English texts as notes) and identifications of quotations (included within square brackets in the Latin texts) should provide enough information on details.

Bibliography

The bibliography is not an exhaustive list of literature on Roman drama, but rather a selection of books and articles (mainly in English) that are useful starting points for readers who would like to explore the subject beyond the material given in this anthology. Hence the bibliography mainly lists editions, commentaries, translations and surveys as well as introductions to dramatic poets and genres and to the background of Roman drama. The entries are arranged in thematic sections and include brief comments where necessary.

References

The texts presented are divided into Testimonia (T), Dramatic texts (D) and *Nachleben* (N); the passages in each section are numbered consecutively. Together with the letter symbol for each section texts can be identified and referred to easily and concisely (e.g. T 1; D 1; N 1). The same is true for the Introduction (I) and its sections (e.g. I 1).

Notes for the Reader

Illustrations

The figures can be found at the end of the Introduction, on pp. 31-3.

Introduction:
Overview of Roman Drama

I 1. Background and evolution

According to the prevailing Roman tradition (adopted by modern scholars) Roman 'literary' drama emerged in 240 BCE, one year after the end of the First Punic War (264-241 BCE), when the magistrates in charge commissioned the poet Livius Andronicus to produce a play (or plays) in Greek style for the annual public festival. Later Roman writers, who applied the literary standards of their own time and regarded the development in Rome against the background of Greece, thought that Rome acquired poetry rather late (cf. e.g. T 5). By the mid-third century BCE Greek drama, for instance, had existed for centuries and already gone through several phases: notably the classical period in the fifth century BCE, when Aeschylus (525/24-456/55 BCE), Sophocles (497/96-406/05 BCE) and Euripides (485/84-407/06 BCE) produced tragedies and Aristophanes (c. 445-385 BCE) was active in the area of Old Comedy; followed by the Hellenistic period, best known for Menander (342/41-293/92 BCE), who wrote New Comedy. Dramatic performances in Italy prior to 240 BCE consisted of various indigenous, pre-literary forms as well as productions of classical and Hellenistic Greek dramas in the Hellenized southern regions.

This specific historical situation influenced what was to become 'Roman drama'. By the middle of the third century BCE Romans had been in contact with other nations in Italy and elsewhere in the Mediterranean for centuries, including Etruscans, Oscans and other Italic peoples, Greeks in mainland Greece and in the Greek colonies and also Carthaginians. Romans had trade links with all these inhabitants of the Mediterranean and were exposed to various aspects of their cultures. For instance, Romans will have seen a variety of dramatic performances and experienced different performance conventions, besides having access to written scripts where they existed. Hence, when the Romans started to produce their own dramatic poetry in Latin, their poets did not develop it from scratch, but could build upon sophisticated dramatic forms that had been established elsewhere. The major dramatic genres in Rome, therefore, did not undergo a gradual and independent development from simple to more refined forms; instead shadowy beginnings were immediately followed by a relatively advanced literary stage.

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Above all, Greek drama exerted a major influence. Greek drama was open to being taken over by non-Greeks, since, besides catering for Athenian audiences, it had the potential for universality and adaptability as it dealt with general issues of human behaviour and society. Besides, the Romans in particular are said to have been highly receptive, flexible and ready to appropriate whatever suited them; hence they were able to adopt and adapt convenient dramatic structures and elements. So it may not be a coincidence that it was the Romans who took the step of developing something new and tailored to their own situation out of the existing forms of Greek literary drama.

With the transposition of Greek tragedies and comedies into Latin, the art of 'literary translation' is said to have been introduced as an artistic method to Europe. This type of translation does not consist in word-for-word literal rendering, but in transposing the meaning and structure of texts to a different environment; this process leads to genuine literary works based on models in a foreign language, but arranged for another culture with its own traditions. Thereby the Romans became the first cultural community in Europe to appropriate and adapt literary models from another European culture.

Since early Roman playwrights worked on the basis of existing literature, they were confronted with a wide variety of models; their choices as to what to select from this range of possibilities and how to reuse this material constitute their first independent artistic decisions. They apparently favoured stories and themes relevant to contemporary Roman audiences and adapted dramatic structures to the requirements of the Latin language and to the emerging conventions of the Roman stage. Soon after their first experiences with Greek-style serious and light drama (tragedy and comedy), early Roman playwrights additionally developed Roman variants on this basis: Roman-style serious and light drama, i.e. dramas on events from Roman history (praetexta) and comedies set in Rome and Italy and dealing with family affairs (togata). The range of dramatic genres in Rome was enriched further when pre-literary dramatic forms in Italy became literary in the first century BCE.

I 2. Dramatic genres

Ancient Rome eventually saw a wider variety of dramatic genres than classical Greece: there were dramatic forms taken over from the Greeks (tragedy and comedy), Roman variants of these dramatic genres developed on the basis of the Greek precedent (praetexta and togata) as well as indigenous varieties that became literary and more sophisticated (Atellana, mime, pantomime). These dramatic genres with their typical characteristics were distinguished from each other from the beginning,

even though specific generic terms are only attested later in some cases. By the late Republican/early Augustan period the appropriate terminology had been developed in Rome, and ancient scholars discussed the relationships between and the characteristics of the various dramatic genres (in addition to what dramatic poets themselves had done in some of their plays). Results of these considerations survive as well-structured systems (more or less complete) in late-antique grammarians, commentators and scholiasts (cf. T 12).

According to these, the main dramatic genres are divided into their Greek and their Roman varieties and into four corresponding types for each side. In the system outlined by the grammarian Diomedes (writing in the fourth century CE) these are *tragica* (*tragoedia*, also called *crepidata* by other writers), *comica* (*comoedia*), *satyrica*, *mimica* for the Greek side and *praetextata* (called *praetexta* by earlier writers), *tabernaria* (called *togata* by other writers), *Atellana*, *planipes* (called *mimus* by other writers) for the Roman side. Greek dramatic genres are distinguished from Roman ones by their setting; the various dramatic forms on each side differ in protagonists, mood and subject matter, while Greek and Roman versions in the same position correspond in type; distinctions between dramatic genres based on formal features such as dramatic structure, metrical form or language are not made. This organization of dramatic genres and also empirical evidence indicate that Greece only had the dramatic forms and terms of tragedy, comedy, satyr-play and mime; further distinctions were partly unnecessary and partly not attempted. In Rome, however, more specific terms were coined, probably owing to the greater variety of dramatic forms and perhaps also to a greater generic awareness of a later period. The new terms were often derived from characteristic pieces of the protagonists' clothing.

The most common form of serious drama in Rome was ***tragoedia***, also called ***fabula crepidata*** in technical discourse (after the tragic shoe: Gr. κρηπίς, Lat. *crepida*) and usually referred to as 'tragedy' in modern scholarship. This is Roman tragedy of Greek type, i.e. dramas in Latin on sections of Greek myth in an elevated style, based on existing Greek plays on the same myth (mainly those by the three great Greek tragic poets of the classical period) or on mythographical or even other literary sources. This form of drama was introduced to Rome by her first poet Livius Andronicus; the only fully preserved examples of Roman tragedy are dramas composed by the imperial playwright Seneca. Although no connection of individual tragedies to specific events in Roman history can be demonstrated, Roman poets seem to have chosen myths that were relevant to Roman audiences on a general level, for instance when they involved discussions of the legitimacy of power or of the relationship between victors and the conquered; they not only presented these stories

in Latin, but also used Roman concepts and reference points relevant to Roman audiences. The subject matter for a sizeable number of Roman tragedies was taken from the Trojan cycle, though other mythical cycles were also present from the start; the last Republican tragedian Accius even seems to have made an attempt to cover as wide a range of myths as possible (cf. D 1-5; 14).

Fabula praetexta or *praetextata* (in a later variant) is a genuine Roman form of serious drama (cf. Hor. *Ars P.* 285-8), which dramatizes scenes from Rome's early (almost mythical) history as well as significant events from the more recent past or contemporary incidents (e.g. Romulus and Remus; Brutus and the foundation of the Republic; military victories); historical drama was not recognized as a separate dramatic genre in Greece. The protagonists in these historical dramas are Roman magistrates, generals and other public figures. This explains the Latin name for this dramatic genre, derived from a quintessentially Roman garment, the *toga praetexta*, worn by curule magistrates as a symbol of their position. Despite their different subject matter, these historical dramas seem to have been close to Roman tragedies in form and style. The genre of praetexta was inaugurated by Naevius, Rome's second poet, who apparently made the fledgling literary genres in Rome 'more Roman'. Nowadays, few remains of praetextae survive (merely some titles and fragments); a single example of this dramatic genre is completely extant, the imperial pseudo-Senecan *Octavia* (cf. D 6; 15).

Fabula palliata refers to light drama of Greek type in Rome (*comoedia*). Initially these dramas were simply called *comoediae*; later they acquired the generic description of *fabulae palliatae*, presumably in order to distinguish them from comedies in Roman setting, called *fabulae togatae*, the two varieties being named after a typical Greek and a typical Roman outer garment. Palliatae were based on works of Hellenistic New Comedy, particularly those by Menander. They often presented love affairs in a private setting, frequently following a standard plot: a young man is in love with a girl, who is in the possession of a pimp or a wealthier rival; hence the young man needs money, which he finds with the help of a clever slave, often by tricking his father and by using all means of deception. In the end the girl is revealed as the daughter of a respected citizen, abducted in her youth, recognized by means of various tokens; therefore a marriage becomes possible, and the negative characters are punished. However, there are also a number of variations of this basic plot (cf. T 13), including some unexpected varieties, such as Plautus' *Amphitruo*, which the poet himself defines as 'tragi-comedy' (cf. T 13a; D 7). Such comedies discuss general moral and ethical questions relevant to Roman audiences. Greek-style comedy in Rome came into being at about the same time as Greek-style tragedy, both forms being introduced

by Livius Andronicus. The most famous representatives are the mid-Republican playwrights Plautus and Terence; a number of their plays survive complete (cf. D 7-11).

The Roman form of comedy, ***fabula togata***, named after the characteristic Roman garment, the *toga*, is a complement to *fabula palliata*. While the expression *fabula togata* seems to have been the term commonly used for Roman comedy, it functioned as the overall description of all Roman types of drama in some grammatical systems: in these Roman comedy was called (*fabula*) *tabernaria* (derived from *taberna*, 'wooden hut'). In any case *fabula tabernaria* or *fabula togata* (in the sense of 'Roman comedy') completes the set-up that allows for a four-fold division of major dramatic genres with two different types of pairings (serious and light or Greek and Roman). The two forms of light drama in Rome correspond to each other in types of plot and rank of characters while they are distinguished by their respective Greek or Roman settings and personages; both forms of light drama differ from the serious dramatic genres by the lowliness of the protagonists and the private subject matter. The emergence of togatae probably in the early second century BCE is likely to be a result of differentiation: it was possible and desirable to create a Roman comic form when palliatae were becoming more Hellenic, but had provided precedents for plot-based light drama in Latin. Togatae differ from palliatae beyond the setting, even though poets of togatae seem to have continued to look to Greek New Comedy as a dramatic model in terms of structure and possible plots. Togatae were apparently more serious and solemn, and they seem to have dealt with more 'normal' love relationships within the family: there is a marked focus on marriages, discussions of projected matches, preparations and consequences of marriages, unfaithfulness and divorce. Togatae only survive in fragments from the Republican period (cf. D 12).

Fabula Atellana is a distinct form of light drama, named after the Oscan town of Atella in Campania, where it is said to have been first performed. It may have been brought to Rome by Oscan workmen, where it was Romanized. Later, this dramatic genre acquired literary status, when it came to be more regular and to be based on written scripts. Quintessentially, Atellanae featured a fixed number of stock characters with invariable features, the 'Oscan characters' (*Oscae personae*). Extant titles and fragments of literary Atellanae as well as testimonia point to at least four stock figures, who share a certain degree of gluttony, clownishness and foolishness and who bear simple, speaking names: Maccus, the fool and stupid clown; Bucco, the foolish braggart; Pappus, the foolish old man; Dossennus, the cunning trickster and/or glutton. However, there were various types of Atellanae, including mythical dramas and palliata-like stories. Fragments of literary Atellanae from the

early first century BCE remain; in this period Atellanae could be given as 'after-pieces' after performances of dramas of other genres.

The Greek *mimus* is called *planipes* in Latin, after the bare feet of its performers (or the humbleness of its plot or its performance in the orchestra). But both *mimus* and *planipes* are used as terms for the Roman type by Latin authors; *mimus* seems to be the more common form, with *planipes* found mainly in technical contexts. Ancient grammarians define *planipes/mimus* as a simple and humble form analogous to the Greek mime. In Rome mimes are similar to Atellanae in that they had gone through a pre-literary phase in Italy before they became literary. Both genres tend to be given a minor role in systems of dramatic genres, as they are regarded as less sophisticated than Greek and Roman versions of 'tragedy' and 'comedy'. Mimes turned literary only at the very end of the Republican period, when they might be given as 'after-pieces'; fragments of mimes from this period have been preserved. Although mimes were regarded as low, crude and vulgar, they could include serious (philosophical or moral) messages and comments on topical issues (cf. D 13).

The Roman *pantomimus* was a type of dance by a single performer, who, by his movement and gestures, interpreted a text, which was sung by a chorus accompanied by a variety of musical instruments. The stories presented in pantomimes were based on famous mythical and historical characters, on the analogy of serious drama; in contrast to performances of those dramatic genres, where different characters could appear on stage together and interact, the characters and their actions could only be portrayed successively in a pantomime. Although ancient sources date the introduction of pantomime to Rome to 22 BCE, it is likely to have emerged already in the late 40s BCE, marking the final stages of developments on the Roman stage during the Republican period. The genre was popular and promoted under emperors from Augustus until late antiquity. In pantomimes music, dance, costumes and props were paramount, and audiences were not required to understand the words fully in order to follow the story or to enjoy the performance.

I 3. Dramatic poets

The early poets in Rome, who established Latin as a literary language and initiated the creation of literary works in Latin in the Republican period, did not come from Rome, but from other parts of Italy or even from outside Italy. All these regions of the Mediterranean, particularly Campania and the area around Tarentum, were heavily influenced by Greek culture. Hence these poets brought knowledge of their local customs and language, along with familiarity with Greek traditions, to

Rome. Yet despite their diverse origins they all used the Latin language when they started their literary careers in Rome. Moreover, in contrast to practitioners of other literary genres, the early dramatists were of low social status, being slaves, freedmen or foreigners. Only towards the end of the Republic, when dramas were no longer necessarily composed for full-scale stage productions, did educated noblemen start writing dramatic poetry. The early dramatists were in touch with influential noblemen and may have accepted individual commissions, but it is unlikely that they were generally dependent on individuals as 'client poets' and therefore had to compromise their poetry. They probably just had to make sure that their plays were successful with the audience at large so as to win further contracts, since they received payment for their plays, which presumably constituted at least part of their living.

The Republican comic poets Plautus and Terence as well as the imperial tragic poet Seneca are the only Roman playwrights by whom complete dramas survive. However a number of further dramatists are known at least by name (besides *c.* 120 lines from light drama, mostly palliatae, and *c.* 260 lines from tragedies transmitted without indication of playwright or work), and several are represented by a sizeable number of titles and fragments (though the reading of titles and the attribution of fragments are not always certain). Those who are regarded as the major representatives of Roman drama today, because a significant portion of their works survive and because they are mentioned by later writers, had already come to be regarded as the more important poets in antiquity, which in turn influenced the attention given to their works. The mere existence of further writers, however, proves that writing plays was a more widespread activity than the usual focus on the major representatives might suggest (cf. T 4-6).

The more prominent playwrights in the Republican period are distributed over genres and periods as follows: writers of tragedies (crepidatae) and comedies (palliatae) are spread over the period from the beginnings of Roman drama to the early first century BCE; for tragedy five major poets are attested (Livius Andronicus, Naevius, Ennius, Pacuvius, Accius), for comedy there are at least eight well-known poets (Livius Andronicus, Naevius, Ennius, Plautus, Caecilius Statius, Luscius Lanuvinus, Terence, Turpilius). The series for praetexta and togata have fewer representatives, but end about the same time; the known poets for praetextae are Naevius, Ennius, Pacuvius, Accius, for togatae there are Titinius, Afranius, Atta. For literary Atellana, literary mime and pantomime, which flourished throughout much shorter periods, fewer poets are attested, and their dates are closer together: for literary Atellana there are Pomponius and Novius in the early first century; literary mimes were written by Decimus Laberius and Publilius Syrus in the mid-first

century; and for pantomime Pylades from Cilicia and Bathyllos from Alexandria are credited with 'developing the Italian style of dance' in the mid to late first century BCE (cf. Appendix 1; 2).

Rome's first known playwright was **Lucius Livius Andronicus** (c. 280/70-200 BCE); according to the prevailing Roman tradition he introduced several literary genres to Rome and was instrumental in lifting Roman performance culture to a 'literary' level (cf. T 1; 3). He produced a Latin version of Homer's *Odyssey* and thus the first epic in Latin (*Odusia*). This achievement probably established his poetic credentials and made him an ideal candidate when the magistrates decided to introduce Greek-style drama at the public festival of 240 BCE. Livius Andronicus provided a play (or plays) for this festival and continued to write Greek-style comedies and tragedies throughout his career. The extant remains of his poetry in all literary genres are meagre: titles of between eight and ten tragedies (and about 40, partly incomplete, verses) and of two or three comedies (and a few fragments), about 40 verses from the *Odusia* and testimonia on a ritual song.

His immediate successor and contemporary **Gnaeus Naevius** (c. 280/60-200 BCE) continued to be active in a variety of literary genres. He also wrote an epic, tragedies and comedies, but he took the step of increasing the 'Roman' element in these literary genres and of adding a genuinely Roman dramatic form: his epic was not an adaptation of a Greek mythical story, it rather narrated an event from Roman history, the First Punic War (*Bellum Poenicum*); Naevius also inaugurated serious drama on Roman subjects (praetexta) as he wrote plays about events from early Roman history and recent incidents. His works of Greek-style dramatic genres feature allusions to Roman reality too. Because of this and due to some questionable biographical notices Naevius has often been regarded as particularly outspoken and as even having run into trouble with the authorities on this account. However, the evidence is doubtful, and he might just have been a well-informed individual, closely following contemporary developments. All works of Naevius have only been transmitted in fragments: there are titles of about 35 comedies and about 140 (partly incomplete) comic verses, titles of six tragedies and about 60 (partly incomplete) tragic verses, titles of two praetextae with a few lines each and about 60 fragments of the epic *Bellum Poenicum*. Naevius' tragedies took up some of the stories dramatized by Livius Andronicus, while he also introduced new topics, for instance by presenting a god on stage in his tragedy *Lycurgus*. In antiquity Naevius was mainly known as a comic poet; and the fragments of his prolific output foreshadow characteristics later found in Plautus.

Livius Andronicus and Naevius were followed by **Quintus Ennius** (239-169 BCE), who was about a generation younger than the two pioneers.

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Ennius was arguably the most versatile early Latin poet and made important contributions to the establishment of Roman literature and national identity (cf. Hor. *Epist.* 1.19.7: *pater Ennius* – 'father Ennius'). His epic *Annales* was the first comprehensive narrative of Roman history in Latin verse (and the first Roman epic written in hexameters). Ennius' reputation in later periods largely rests on this epic and on his tragedies; his comedies and praetextae only play a minor role. The poet's versatility and his experiments with content and form are demonstrated also by his so-called *opera minora*, his other works besides epic and drama, particularly by the new literary genre of *satura* and philosophical writings. What remains from Ennius' works are about 24 titles of dramas and more than 400 (partly incomplete) verses, including two praetextae and two comedies, more than 600 verses of *Annales* and about 200 verses and passages in prose from the *opera minora*. In addition to developing Latin poetic technique further and presenting himself as a self-confident poet, Ennius' works display a significant 'Roman' character, since characteristic values and forms of behaviour (such as virtue, bravery, loyalty or support of the community) come to the fore (cf. D 1-2).

Marcus Pacuvius (*c.* 220-130 BCE) belongs to a later generation of Republican dramatists. He was the first Roman playwright to concentrate on serious drama only (besides being a painter); after Ennius a distinction between poets of various light dramatic genres and poets of serious drama became established. Of Pacuvius' dramatic output, about thirteen titles of tragedies (and about 430, partly incomplete, lines) as well as four verses of the praetexta *Paulus* survive. Pacuvius, who was regarded as 'learned' (*doctus*) by later ancient authorities (cf. T 5; 6), seems to have preferred less famous versions or sections of well-known myths for his tragedies, which allowed him to focus on particular themes (such as family relationships, struggles for power or philosophical discussions) and to create effective drama (cf. D 3-4).

Lucius Accius (170-*c.* 80 BCE), the last major tragic poet in Republican times, wrote dramas as well as works of other literary genres. As a dramatist, he focused on serious genres like his predecessor Pacuvius, but far more dramas are known for Accius. Titles of about 45 tragedies and two praetextae survive, along with almost 700 (partly incomplete) verses. In addition Accius was a literary critic and grammarian influenced by Hellenistic scholarship; he wrote treatises on grammatical, theatrical and literary questions (*Didascalica*, *Pragmatica*), an epic *Annales* and some other poetry, poorly attested. Even though Ennius provides a precedent for a versatile poet who went beyond drama and epic and was active in a variety of literary genres, Accius is the only Republican playwright who also composed separate works on literary questions and theatre history and thereby engaged with the subject of drama in both theory and

practice. This academic interest agrees with developments in the late second and the first centuries BCE, when scholars, who were not dramatic poets themselves, started to discuss aspects of literary history. The number and distribution of preserved titles for his tragedies suggest that Accius explored the full range of mythical cycles and a corresponding breadth of sources. Like Pacuvius, he strove for dramatic effects; at the same time he seems to have chosen myths or versions and sections of myths that allowed him to discuss questions relevant to Roman audiences (such as ancestry, genealogies of families or the consequences of deeds done in the past on later generations). Such topics become connected with another important aspect, the theme of proper rule, when someone's descent and membership in a house or family function as legitimizing factors (cf. D 5-6).

Titus Maccius Plautus (*c.* 250-184 BCE) is the earliest Roman dramatist by whom complete plays survive, and he is also the one for whom the largest number of plays is extant. Plautus was the first Roman playwright to concentrate on one dramatic genre only (palliata). He seems to have been active in Rome as a successful dramatist for more than two decades around 200 BCE and to have been a prolific poet. Later 130 'Plautine' comedies circulated under his name; therefore Plautus was one of the earliest Republican playwrights to become the object of scholarly discussion, when ancient critics tried to distinguish between genuine and spurious plays. Various attempts were made until Varro identified a core of 21 comedies that were accepted as genuine by everyone. These were called *fabulae Varronianae* ('Varro's plays'); and it is virtually certain that these are the 21 (almost complete) comedies in the extant Plautine manuscripts (besides, there are further titles and fragments, which may or may not be genuine). In antiquity already Plautus was known for his metrical variety, linguistic exuberance and inventiveness. The characters in his plays remain in constant contact with the audience in awareness of the performance situation ('metatheatre'). Plots may seem to be full of meaningless comic banter and to be governed by chance and unforeseen events, but they go beyond that in telling coherent and well-structured stories. Within this framework Plautus presents, for instance, a wide range of human temperaments and emotions in a variety of situations, tensions between young lovers and the conventions of society, arguments between members of different generations, demonstrations of the power of chance, comments on social customs, different ways of love, the problem of justice and punishment, moral considerations governing human behaviour, faithfulness and loyalty, ways of dealing with foreigners as well as other social and moral issues (cf. T 13a-b; D 7-8).

Caecilius Statius (*c.* 230/20-168/7 BCE) was a palliata poet active between Plautus and Terence. Caecilius' palliatae, however, have only

been transmitted in fragments. What remains are 42 titles of comedies, almost 300 (partly incomplete) lines quoted in later writers and, what is unique for Roman drama, a papyrus fragment (originally containing 550 lines) of the play *Obolostates sive Faenerator* ('*Money-lender*'). Caecilius is often seen as an intermediate or transitional poet. Indeed he seems to have followed the Plautine tradition of his predecessors in aspects such as metre, style, linguistic features, use of puns and comic effects, while in other areas such as themes, elements of dramatic technique and involvement in literary discussions he looks forward to Terence. Issues and values prominent in Caecilius are mostly related to family life, the corresponding relationships and the impact on one's position in society (cf. D 9).

Publius Terentius Afer (*c.* 195/4-159 BCE) is the second writer of preserved palliatae after Plautus. Terence is also the only Republican dramatist whose output seems to have been preserved in its entirety and the only one for whom production notices (*didascaliae*) survive, which give information about dates and occasions for the plays and about individuals involved in the original performances. Terence's plays are often regarded as more restrained and more 'Hellenic' than those of Plautus, since they have prologues dealing with metaliterary questions, and there is less linguistic and metrical exuberance, less explicit metatheatre, less slapstick comedy and less overt allusion to a Roman context. However, his plays do have a specific significance for contemporary audiences, since, within the framework of the standard comic plot, they address general human problems, presented within a bourgeois world, for instance various relationships between siblings, friends or parents and children, love affairs as well as problems of education. According to Terence's prologues, some of his plays experienced problems getting a hearing when they were produced for the first time; yet the descriptions in the prologues point to opposition from contemporary playwrights, who tried to oust Terence from the stage because of his success, as the reason for these difficulties rather than poor audience response (cf. T 13c-d; 14; D 10-11).

Sextus Turpilius is the last known writer of palliatae within the Republican period; he died in old age in Sinuessa in 104/3 BCE. Thirteen titles and just over 200 (partly incomplete) lines of his plays have been preserved. While Turpilius appears to have followed Terence's (and Caecilius') more restrained and 'Hellenized' version of palliata in titles, themes and choice of Greek models, he seems to have been closer to Plautus (and Naevius) in language, use of stylistic features and scene structures, besides appropriating elements of contemporary developments in other dramatic genres.

Titinius (*fl. c.* 200 BCE) is probably the oldest known writer of genuinely Roman comedies (togatae). Virtually nothing is known about his biography, and his dates are therefore disputed. The general consensus of modern scholars seems to favour placing Titinius before Terence and close to Plautus, and he is widely thought to have been active in the years just after the Second Punic War. The evidence from approximately fifteen titles and about 180 (partly incomplete) lines indeed suggests that Titinius is an early representative of togata: there is a noticeable similarity to both Atellana and Plautine palliata, which might point to a dramatic genre that is evolving and looking for its own distinctive position within the framework of light dramatic genres. Although Titinius' plays display features similar to palliatae, they exhibit characteristics different from them, in particular the prominence of more 'normal' family relationships (e.g. love affairs and marriage arrangements within the family) or the notable presence of Roman and Italic places and institutions. Beyond the standard comic plots Titinius seems to have used stories that allowed him to comment upon issues of topical relevance in his time.

Lucius Afranius (*fl. c.* 160-120 BCE) is the second known representative of togata. Although the ancients regarded Afranius as the most important togata poet, and hence the largest number of extant togata fragments comes from his works, almost nothing is known about his dates and biography. Statements by ancient writers and internal evidence place his poetic activity in the second half of the second century BCE, in the period after Terence. Forty-three titles and about 430 (partly incomplete) lines have been preserved, which reveal some of Afranius' characteristics and preferred topics. On the basis established by Titinius, Afranius seems to have developed the dramatic genre of togata further and given it a distinctive form in relation to contemporary palliata: palliata was becoming more 'Hellenic' by the period of Terence, and togata underwent a similar development by Afranius' time, led by Terence's precedent. Also, Afranius' plays include metaliterary statements and display the influence of other literary genres. This is combined with entertaining plots typical of this dramatic genre, including issues such as marriages, dowries or difficult relationships between husbands and wives. The family seems to have been a major focus, Afranius enlarging the spectrum of family members involved to the extended family (cf. D 12).

Titus Quinctius Atta is the last of the triad of clearly attested togata poets; he died in Rome in 77 BCE. All that survives of his dramatic output are twelve titles and nearly 25 (partly incomplete) verses. Atta seems to have engaged with Roman issues, while indications of standard comic plots are not lacking. The plays cover Roman games and their organization, lascivious life in a spa, sacrifices and religious customs, mercenaries or a discussion of the first month of the year. These details

confirm the Roman outlook of this dramatic genre and exemplify the general trend towards both spectacle and erudition in Atta's time.

Lucius Pomponius from Bononia (modern Bologna) was active in 89 BCE. He is described as a writer of Atellanae and is even credited with having invented a new genre (cf. Vell. Pat. 2.9.6). However, Novius seems to have been a contemporary of his, and at least a pre-literary Atellana was previously in existence. Hence this description most likely recognizes that Pomponius turned Atellana into a literary dramatic genre. Of his dramatic output about 70 titles of Atellanae and almost 200 (partly incomplete) lines remain. Titles and fragments feature the stock characters of Atellanae, who could apparently experience various (unusual) situations for additional comic effects. Another well-represented area is the world of craftsmen, such as fullers, and of farmers. A number of sometimes rather mundane details of rural affairs or of running a farm are mentioned. Beyond these specific Atellana themes, some titles of Pomponius overlap with those of palliatae and togatae; additionally there are mythical titles, some of which are identical with those of tragedies. There are references to contemporary society and (meta-)literary matters.

Like Pomponius, **Novius** was a writer of Atellanae; he was a contemporary of Pomponius, the two of them representing the literary Atellana in the early first century BCE. Since it is Pomponius rather than Novius who is credited with having invented this dramatic genre, Novius is generally assumed to have been active slightly later or to have been less prominent (*fl. c.* 85 BCE). Fewer titles and fragments are known for him: just over 40 titles and just over 100 (partly incomplete) lines have been preserved. Novius' titles cover some of the same areas as those of Pomponius, namely experiences of Atellana stock characters, the world of tradesmen and farmers, such as fullers and vintners, as well as mythical topics, although the range is not as wide. Novius shares some titles with Roman tragedies, and his remakes of mythical stories seem to have been parodic. In other plays the usual topics of Atellana and light drama surface, such as love affairs and their typical difficulties or problems with inheritance and wives with dowries.

Decimus Laberius (*c.* 106-43 BCE) was a writer of literary mimes in the late Republic. He composed mimes for the stage, although he came from an equestrian family; this social status sets him apart from other Republican playwrights. What remains of Laberius' mimes are just over 40 titles and about 150 (partly incomplete) lines; the verses spoken when challenged by the dictator Caesar constitute the longest piece extant from the Roman mime. Later writers acknowledged Laberius' wittiness, critical irony and elegant thoughts, but disapproved of his diction, which they regarded as crude and unpolished, condemning colloquialisms and neologisms. The remaining titles and fragments feature frequent comic

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characters, such as wives, courtesans, slaves and masters, as well as typical motifs, such as conflicts between family members, discussions about inheritance and prodigal sons, marriages and festivals, business on farms, tradesmen and, of course, love affairs. Despite this atmosphere, Laberius' mimes were also a means of literary comment, 'philosophical discussion' as well as political and social polemic (cf. D 13).

Publilius Syrus, an actor and writer of mimes, is probably the youngest of the well-known Republican playwrights. After he had started to produce mimes with great success in the towns of Italy, he was fetched to Rome for games organized by the dictator Caesar and produced as star of the show, whence the contest between himself and the older equestrian poet Decimus Laberius followed. Of Publilius Syrus' output only two titles and a few fragments remain, besides a collection of so-called *sententiae*. Apparently his style was sententious and therefore invited to culling and collecting one-liners with proverbial meaning from his writings (cf. D 13).

Towards the end of the Republic changes in the number of new plays produced, in the social status of playwrights and in performance conventions started to take place: while performances of old plays and other entertainment continued, only a few new plays were written for the stage. Instead, from the late first century BCE onwards, noblemen turned to writing poetry as a spare-time activity and intellectual pursuit; they composed dramas to be read, recited and sent to friends, but not necessarily to be performed on stage in full-scale productions. These noblemen focussed on serious drama, composing mainly tragedies and occasionally praetextae; yet no substantial remains survive.

The names of more than thirty writers of tragedy are known for the first centuries BCE and CE; some of these writers are obscure, while a significant number are prominent figures, better known for their political or military activities or their work in other literary genres. These men include, for instance, Cicero's brother Quintus, who is said to have written four tragedies during a sixteen-day leave in the middle of a military campaign, and C. Asinius Pollio, politician, general, orator and historian in the second half of the first century BCE. In the Augustan period L. Varius Rufus wrote a *Thyestes* and Ovid a *Medea*, both praised by Quintilian (cf. T 6). An older contemporary of Seneca was P. Pomponius Secundus (also mentioned by Quintilian), who produced an *Aeneas* and debated tragic diction with Seneca. Tacitus' *Dialogus* portrays Curiatius Maternus, who is credited with *Cato, Domitius, Thyestes* and *Medea*.

Seneca (*c.* 1 BCE-65 CE) is the only imperial dramatist and the only Roman tragic poet by whom complete plays survive. Seneca enjoyed a thorough rhetorical and philosophical education before obtaining various positions at the imperial court (interrupted by exile); his most prominent role was that of tutor and later adviser to the emperor Nero (reigned: 54-

68 CE). The corpus of Senecan drama consists of ten plays. One of those is the praetexta *Octavia*, which is now generally regarded as spurious. It deals with Nero's divorce from his wife Octavia, Claudius' daughter, and his marriage with his beloved Poppaea and was probably written soon after these events some time in the last third of the first century CE. This drama is the only completely preserved example of a praetexta (cf. D 15). Of the remaining nine tragedies, *Hercules Oetaeus* too is often suspected of being spurious, which leaves a corpus of eight genuine tragedies, written presumably during the latter part of Seneca's life. Their exact dates are unknown, and it is also unclear whether they were ever given full-scale productions in public theatres. Seneca's tragedies take up well-known Greek myths, and their form comes closer to classical Greek tragedies than Republican tragedies seem to have done, since they adopt the alternation of episodes and choral odes and have a more regular metrical structure. What is characteristic of them is their sophisticated rhetorical set-up and their highly emotional and expressive atmosphere. The precise meaning and purpose of the tragedies are disputed; various readings, including moral, political and philosophical ones, have been suggested by scholars (cf. D 14).

I 4. Occasions and venues

In Republican times dramatic performances were part of public festivals organized by the magistrates in charge (curule aediles, plebeian aediles or praetor); these were political and religious events, lasting for several days and consisting of sacrifices as well as of a variety of entertainments. Originally there was only one festival, *Ludi Romani*, which dates back to regal times. In 364 BCE scenic performances (*ludi scaenici*) are said to have been added to the festival, which previously had only offered shows in the circus. In 240 BCE, when magistrates commissioned Rome's first poet Livius Andronicus, scenic performances at the Roman games moved to Greek-style drama (cf. T 1). This new form of performances did not remain a single event, but soon developed into a standard feature of Roman festivals.

In the period between the eve of the Second Punic War and the successful completion of this war and of those against eastern kingdoms (c. 220-170 BCE), five further regular festivals were added (*Ludi plebeii, Ludi Ceriales, Ludi Apollinares, Ludi Megalenses, Ludi Florales*). In addition, there were individual public or private festivals on special occasions, such as a military victory, the dedication of a temple or the funeral of an eminent personality. In the late Republic two more regular public festivals were added: *Ludi Victoriae (Sullanae)* and *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris*.

Each of the public festivals had a fixed number of days reserved for dramatic performances, but it is not known how many plays were performed at each festival or on any one day, what the respective proportions for different dramatic genres were or even whether there were any rules for the distribution of dramatic genres. At any rate from the late third/early second century BCE onwards there was a significant number of opportunities for producing and watching plays throughout the year.

Magistrates or noblemen running a festival were given some public funding, which they could supplement by their own means; these funds were used to create venues for shows in the circus and on stage and to buy the entertainment given in those locations, i.e. animals for circus games and plays for dramatic performances.

Initially, different performance venues were used for the various festivals in Rome. All of those were not specifically set up as theatres throughout the year, but were turned into theatrical spaces for a limited time by temporary structures. In the beginning dramas seem to have been staged in the circus, in the Forum or in front of the temple of the god of the respective festival. Temporary stages were erected; and the auditorium was provisional, spectators using the tiers of the circus, the steps of the temple or other convenient structures for seating. And while the site of the Circus Maximus, where circensic games took place, was improved throughout the second century BCE, there was no comparable building activity for venues of scenic performances.

This results in the paradoxical situation that during the most creative period of Roman stage drama there was no permanent stone theatre; instead, plays were acted on temporary stages till the end of the Republic. Yet the absence of a permanent theatre in Rome throughout most of the Republican period is not due to an inability on the part of the Romans to build such structures, but is rather the consequence of a decision against erecting them. Several attempts to construct permanent theatres in Rome were made by various officials throughout the second century BCE, when numerous dramas were composed and produced, but they all failed due to opposition from within the nobility. A number of reasons for this attitude have been proposed; the most likely one is perhaps that a permanent theatre would have interfered with religious traditions, since it would have prevented holding performances in front of the temple of the respective god honoured by a festival; and it would also have prevented performances in the Forum at the heart of the community. Resistance to a permanent structure therefore could be seen as an attempt to preserve traditional civic and religious customs. However, although theatre structures in Rome remained temporary almost till the end of the Republican period, they became more and more ornate and luxurious: the

development towards spectacle affected both the physical appearance of theatre buildings and the preference for pageants, spectacular effects or more sensational dramatic genres (cf. T 8; 11).

In 55 BCE Pompey dedicated the first permanent stone theatre in Rome, a monument that had been built after his triumph in 61 BCE (cf. T 7b; 11a). Pompey's theatre was soon followed by the theatre of Balbus (13 BCE) and the theatre of Marcellus, begun by Caesar and completed and inaugurated by Augustus (13/11 BCE). Pompey's building was a huge complex on the Campus Martius, including a full theatre and a temple of Venus (Victrix) on top of the auditorium, its central wedge forming a monumental staircase leading up to the temple. In the mid-first century BCE, in the run-up to the establishment of the Principate, it had apparently become easier for individuals to erect permanent structures of display, while traditional customs still had to be observed (cf. Figs 1-6).

Due to the peculiar history of theatre buildings at Rome, there is no unambiguous evidence for their shape in the Republican period. Hence, the origins of what was to become the typical layout of a Roman theatre are not entirely certain. It seems, however, that in southern and central Italy elements of the Hellenistic Greek theatre (as common in the western Greek provinces) and local traditions were fused to create a distinctive performance space adapted to the requirements of Roman dramatic performances.

At any rate fully developed Roman theatres differ from Greek ones in a number of significant features (cf. T 7a): whereas Greek theatre buildings tend to make use of a natural hill for the rising auditorium and to give the audience a view into the distance, Roman ones form compact, freestanding, purpose-built units on flat surfaces. The Romans created a self-contained, coherent architectural unit out of a simple stage and a rounded auditorium (with its substructures). Because of the theatre's overall composition, the outline of the stage and its relationship to the spectator area are different in Rome: the auditorium has the size of about a half-circle only, the stage is lower and deeper (to allow for all stage action) and is terminated by the vertical façade of the stage building, directing the audience's view to the inside of the theatre. This façade with its three doors, elaborately decorated in later stone theatres, forms the permanent back wall of the stage; yet the decoration is not related to the setting of particular plays. The area between stage and auditorium (the orchestra, reserved for the chorus in Greek theatres) was used for seats for distinguished spectators. The side-entrances (between auditorium and stage on either side) were vaulted, and there were boxes for the organizers above them. Since, therefore, the Roman stage was framed on all sides, audiences were made to watch as onlookers from a distance.

The impressive remains of Roman theatres that can be found all over

the empire date from early imperial times: the majority of surviving theatre structures belong to the period between the late Republic and the middle of the first century CE. At the same time it is not certain whether new plays written in early imperial times were necessarily designed for full-stage productions in large public theatres; at any rate theatre buildings in those days could be used for all sorts of entertainments. Additionally, there were small private venues for performances or recitations in front of select audiences. Dramatic productions were no longer restricted to public festivals.

I 5. Actors and productions

Whereas in Greece all participants in a dramatic production came from the citizenry, in Rome theatre business was the domain of professionals. In Republican times magistrates bought plays (i.e. presumably scripts) from playwrights (perhaps on the recommendation of professional producers) or from professional producers, who had previously acquired them from poets. It is not entirely clear what information magistrates may have received about plays prior to purchasing them and what their criteria for selection were, but they are likely to have aimed at plays that were bound to be successful with audiences and supportive of Roman ideology.

When the magistrates had chosen a play, they delegated all further arrangements for bringing it on stage to a professional producer/impresario/actor-manager, who had a group of theatre people as well as some equipment at his disposal. The most famous man in this capacity was perhaps Ambivius Turpio, who worked for the comic poets Caecilius Statius and Terence and also originally delivered the prologues to some of Terence's comedies (cf. T 14).

Appearing on stage for payment was looked down upon in Roman society, which prevented members of higher classes from taking up this profession. Hence most actors were of low social status; many were foreigners, freedmen or slaves; and they were denied basic citizen rights. However, successful actors could gain appreciation, win actors' contests and even become 'stars' in the late Republic, such as Q. Roscius Gallus and Clodius Aesopus in Cicero's time (cf. T 10b; 11a). In the first century BCE important public figures such as Sulla or Mark Antony began to socialize with actors, which was a target of reproach for their opponents.

Actors tended to specialize in either serious or light drama, yet they were not confined to one form exclusively. In almost all dramatic genres men played all roles; only mimes had actresses, and this was one reason why this dramatic genre was regarded as licentious. Although the number of players engaged in a performance as well as the number of speaking

actors simultaneously present on stage was not limited to three as in classical Greece, actors' troupes in Rome still seem to have been rather small, for mere economic reasons. Most Roman comedies (the only dramatic genre for which inferences can be made) can be performed by a small number of actors (especially if one assumes a doubling of roles); they could have been supplemented by hired extras on occasion.

Each troupe of actors may have had their own musician, who was probably the composer as well as the performer of the music and arranged, presumably in consultation with the poet, the producer and/or the actors, how the set of various metres as prescribed by the dramatic script should be turned into music, since the majority of metres in Republican drama was accompanied by music and their delivery rather resembled modern arias or recitatives. The musician was called *tibicen*, since he played the *tibia*, a woodwind instrument with reeds. This instrument was virtually always played in pairs, one pipe fingered by each hand; the two parts of the pair (right and left) might be either equal or unequal in length. This allowed for a variety of tones and pitches, from which the musician could choose the version appropriate for each play or each section of a play.

For all venues and dramatic performances, set and scenery were broadly similar: the stage and its back wall represented an open area, frequently a street, in front of the doors to several buildings, with exits to the further distance (typically the countryside and the harbour) and to the nearer distance (typically the city centre) on either side of the stage. Sometimes there was an altar on the stage, but generally additional stage equipment was scarce. The performance had to rely on the imagination of audiences, to whom the particular meaning of buildings and locations in each drama would be made clear by information given in the plays themselves, primarily in the prologue or the initial scenes. Clarity was increased further by the announcement of entrances and exits of characters, the use of gestures and stage action underlining what was being said. Events that could not or did not take place in the open space represented by the stage area could not be shown and had to be narrated by 'messengers', i.e. characters who had watched these incidents taking place in the house or elsewhere and then informed other characters (on stage) about them. Only towards the end of the Republican period and the beginning of the imperial era did stage equipment become more sophisticated, for instance by the use of machines with revolving sides, which could indicate different kinds of background (cf. T 7a). During the final decades of the Republic, when more and more funds were spent on providing dramatic entertainment, the construction of theatres and the materials used became more and more lavish and elaborate (cf. T 8).

Prior to the late-antique period there is little definite evidence on

actors' costumes and masks; details can only be inferred from the plays themselves and from a few references in contemporary or near-contemporary writers. Generally, dress seems to be referred to in the dramatic scripts mainly when there is something special and it is exploited to characterize someone or to enable the plot; characters shown in particular situations may have had the appropriate attire or at least a few props. People in palliatae wear (the tunic and) the *pallium*, which characterizes them as Greeks. In drama set in Roman surroundings actors must have worn Roman dress: in praetextae characters such as consuls might have had a *toga praetexta*; the fragments of the togata mention togas, tunics and shoes.

A further important part of the attire of actors of all dramatic genres consists of masks. Unfortunately, the question of when masks were introduced in Rome is vexed and controversial, since the evidence of the sources is contradictory. However, it would be strange if the Romans dispensed with this device used by all other theatre cultures they experienced, yet adopted and adapted all the other main elements of theatrical practice. Hence the existence of masks in the Roman theatre from early times onwards is generally assumed although their use will have differed across the various dramatic genres; it is clear that masks were known in the imperial period.

I 6. Audiences

Dramatic performances were a 'business' run by a particular group of people specialized in the theatre and paid for by the authorities. Therefore audiences enjoyed performances as entertainment provided by officials and professionals.

Since dramatic performances in Republican Rome were part of public festivals, they could potentially attract a large and diverse crowd of spectators, drawn from all groups of the local populace and visitors from elsewhere. Even though at least some early venues seem not to have been able to seat more than a few thousand spectators, this is already a sizeable number of people; and there are indications that excuses for repetitions of performances might have been sought, which increased the size of the overall audience of an individual production.

As festivals were funded by public money and contributions of the presiding magistrates (or wealthy families), there was no entrance fee. The various groups in the audience must have represented a range of varying degrees of education and experience. Yet plays can obviously be enjoyed on several levels. Some comic prologues suggest that there was noise and unruliness among the audience before the start of a performance, but this does not imply that Roman audiences were

generally unsophisticated or not interested in proper dramatic performances.

By the time of the surviving Republican comedies audiences had gained some experience of watching Greek-style plays in Rome; and judging from the kind of familiarity with Greek culture or dramatic conventions presupposed by Roman dramatic scripts, audiences seem to have become more sophisticated over time. Later dramatists dealt with Greek models more self-confidently, which became possible by the refinement of literary techniques and presumably also by the increased receptiveness of audiences: metaliterary, self-referential comments on dramatic genres and their conventions indicate that playwrights assumed audiences to be familiar with the standard set-up and generic conventions for each dramatic form. Poets would not have included such remarks if there had been no response from audiences. Besides, Cicero highlights the musical and rhythmical sensibility of average audiences (cf. e.g. Cic. *De or.* 3.196; *Parad.* 26; *Orat.* 173).

Audience reactions at revivals of old plays in the late Republican period indicate that spectators were familiar with the music and the verses of particular dramas (cf. e.g. Cic. *Acad.* 2.20; Hor. *Sat.* 2.3.60-2a). They were also able to relate individual lines to the contemporary political situation (cf. T 10). When existing dramatic scripts started to become available beyond the confines of the theatre in the late Republic and recitations of old and new dramas (as of other literary genres) also developed, there were new ways of engaging with dramatic poetry, and new types of audiences with specific interests emerged. The availability of scripts, for instance, enabled close reading and scholarly discussions of all sorts of questions concerning the plays (cf. I 10).

I 7. Poetry and performance

Greek-style tragedies and comedies in Rome were set in Greece and based on Greek dramas with similar plots or at least on Greek myths narrated elsewhere. Roman playwrights apparently did not translate or transpose word for word the Greek dramas they had chosen as models. Instead, they used a method often called 'free translation': they transferred plays according to the conventions of the Latin language and Roman thinking, transposing the plot and the main ideas of the Greek models, while adapting, altering, replacing, cutting and adding points of detail (cf. T 15). Even if Roman poets started off by using existing Greek dramas as the basis for their own plays and might therefore be thought to display little 'originality' in the modern sense, the poets' choices of what to transpose and how to do it are signs of their own poetic individuality. Their independence is also suggested by the so-called technique of

'contamination', when Roman playwrights combined elements from different Greek dramas into one new play.

For plots and subject matter of Greek-style dramas Republican playwrights seem to have looked back to the 'classics' as their main models: writers of tragedies to the classical Greek tragic poets, Euripides in particular, and writers of comedies to the poets of Hellenistic New Comedy. Both of these main groups of models had a potential for transferability, which, for instance, the Old Comedy of Aristophanes (just as Roman praetextae) did not have to the same extent, due to clear references to particular events in a specific people's history. Contemporary Hellenistic drama is more likely to have been one of the vehicles by which Roman poets got to know Greek 'classics' and to have demonstrated aspects of dramatic technique and ways of presentation.

The fact that from the start Roman poets could build on a fully developed literature in Greek, complete with literary criticism and early commentaries, as well as on indigenous traditions is perhaps one of the reasons why from the outset Roman poets seem to have been aware of literary techniques and literary history. This is obvious from numerous explicit metatheatrical references in light dramatic genres (as serious dramatic genres tend to limit these), which refer to the fact that what is going on is a performance (in which the actors take part), play with characteristics of the respective dramatic genre, allude to other dramatic genres or even discuss other poets (cf. T 13-14). Poets also take the work of predecessors into account in that they refer to it (seriously or parodically) or avoid overlap. The same is true for writers of serious dramatic genres, who, exploring connections in more indirect ways, might allude to lines of earlier playwrights, pass over topics and plots already dramatized by predecessors or prefer to present those in different ways (cf. e.g. the story of Medea: D 2; 3; 5; 14).

This awareness, along with specialization and differentiation among dramatic genres, means that a genuine Roman literary tradition, in addition to the Greek one, emerged from a relatively early stage in the development of drama at Rome. This led to intertextual relationships among Roman plays of the same and of different dramatic genres (on top of similar connections to Greek texts). At the same time the proliferation of poets and their restrictions to specific dramatic genres may have been a cause for rivalry between playwrights in Republican times, as suggested by Terence's prologues, since competition for being the foremost poet in any one dramatic genre and arguments about keeping to the rules arose (cf. T 13-14).

Although all that remains of Roman dramas today are texts (many of them in fragmentary state), dramatic scripts were only one element contributing to full-scale events (at least while dramas continued to be

performed in large public theatres): these originally were comprehensive performances including all sorts of visual, acoustic and situational effects, while stage actions may have been designed with a view to the possibilities offered by the layout of the venues. And if one is to believe intellectuals of the late Republican period, the spectacular aspects of dramatic performances became more and more dominant over time at the expense of meaningful dialogue and presentations of entire dramas (cf. T 11). In early imperial times this seems to have led eventually to a split between impressive performances and the composition of complete serious dramas not necessarily designed for full-scale performances.

I 8. Form and style

Early Roman poets were active in a variety of literary genres. And while they observed a basic generic distinction between epic and drama from the start (for instance by using different metres), they developed a broadly similar form for both tragedy and comedy when they first adapted it from the Greeks, though distinctions in style and vocabulary between serious and light dramatic genres were present from the outset.

For the Republican period definite descriptions of formal elements, especially in the area of dramatic structure, can hardly be given, since the comedies by Plautus and Terence are the only examples to survive as complete scripts. Nevertheless, it can be inferred tentatively that dramatic structures were broadly similar across all Roman dramatic genres common in the Republican period, particularly tragedy, praetexta, comedy and togata: plays consisted of a prologue (not obligatory) and a subsequent series of monologues and dialogues, which could express a variety of different thoughts and feelings. In contrast to Greek drama, Roman Republican dramas did not have choral interludes; hence there was no separation of scenes by choral odes; instead the dramatic action ran through continuously (without act-division).

There was, however, a strong musical element, extended (in comparison with Greece) and transferred to individual actors: as extant scripts show, only a limited number of lines were in spoken metre (iambic senarius); a large proportion of verses was accompanied by music from the instrumentalist and therefore rather 'sung' or 'recited' (in longer iambic or trochaic metres or lyric metres). Almost all plays in the light dramatic genres seem not to have had a chorus; choruses did, however, feature in tragedies and praetextae, where they were integrated into the action, just as another actor. It is only in the imperial dramas by Seneca (the only extant examples from this period) that there is a return to the structure of Greek dramas as it were, since his plays consist of an alternation of episodes and choral odes, sung by a chorus whose relation to the action

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may be tenuous. Also, his iambic lines allow for less resolution and therefore come closer to the form of the Greek trimeter.

The language of Republican drama belongs to what is called 'archaic Latin', which indicates an earlier level of language in comparison with the 'classical Latin' of the Ciceronian period. Hence the plays exhibit linguistic features that had become obsolete by classical times, particularly in the area of morphology and syntax. The dramas also display stylistic elements typical of archaic poetry, such as a penchant for alliteration, assonance and other sound effects; word plays and puns are employed, as well as neologisms and complex compounds. Later writers sometimes regarded the language of the early poets as unsophisticated or artificial, while it was admired by archaists in the second century CE. Plays adapted from the Greek included Greek names and also some Greek terms, but equally Roman terms and references to Roman institutions, their number naturally being higher in dramatic genres set in Rome.

The style of Seneca, writing after the classical period and having enjoyed a rhetorical education like all young men of his age, is influenced by what was taught in contemporary declamation schools. His dramas have therefore been called 'rhetorical', often in a negative sense, but the epithet should rather be used more neutrally to describe the use of succinct expressions, set speeches and figures of speech common in his time.

I 9. Characteristics and developments

Each dramatic genre and each playwright as well as original performances and revivals have their own individual characteristics. Within the conventions of their chosen dramatic genre, poets could give their pieces a particular shape by choosing and emphasizing particular topics, themes and styles of presentation. Despite the scattered evidence, it is therefore possible to some extent to establish specific characteristics of individual playwrights.

At the same time one can identify elements that Republican playwrights seem to have had in common and that therefore characterize (early) Roman drama. The fact that proper Roman drama started with the adaptation of Greek plays and stories contributed to creating a distance between the immediate experiences of audiences and the world presented on stage; consequently audiences will have felt less directly involved and could therefore both be entertained and be encouraged to reflect on the issues presented; due to general human problems addressed even dramas based on Greek stories could interest Roman audiences.

Roman adaptations of Greek drama privileged topics that were particularly important to Roman society (by means of choices and changes

made by poets), such as questions of adequate moral conduct, social behaviour, the relationship between family members, issues of government, the role of a major political power, dealing with conquered people, treatment of foreigners, influx of foreign (Greek) customs or incoming new religious and philosophical ideas. Dramatic forms based on Greek precedents as well as dramatic genres later developed in Rome therefore played a role in defining and confirming Roman self-understanding and confidence against the background of political and social changes. The dramatic action on stage also allowed the presentation of ideas new to Roman audiences (e.g. Greek philosophy).

Still, Roman dramas were not entirely dominated by material which could be seen as 'educational' or by topical references to the contemporary situation. So, while praetextae naturally alluded to specific events in Roman history, which might be recent incidents, the remaining dramatic genres typically avoided explicit allusions to topical issues of contemporary politics. Plays were prevented from becoming too serious as a result of the issues touched upon by combining those with entertaining features. This is obvious for light dramatic genres, which contained all sorts of jokes, farce and slapstick, ridiculous characters and weird actions, although the Roman light dramatic genre of togata remained more sober than the Greek-based palliata. Increasingly, tragedies included stunning scenes, spectacular scenic effects, sudden reversals and the presentation of ordinary figures or noble characters in reduced circumstances. The only dramatic genre rather immune to these developments was perhaps praetexta, since it might have been difficult to mix events from Roman history with humorous scenes; the only sensational element in praetextae may have consisted in a tendency towards spectacular battle scenes.

Hence, over the course of the Republican period, Greek-style tragedy and comedy gradually came closer together since they adopted features of one another and exploited similar structures and motifs: tragedy employed effective comic motifs, and comedy addressed general problems of society. Additional dramatic genres that appeared (in literary form) from the late second century onwards and throughout the first century BCE (especially Atellana, mime, pantomime) proceeded along similar lines. All new forms of performances continued tendencies observable in late Republican comedies and tragedies: they presented ordinary, rather simple characters, stunning scenic effects and elaborate stage-business and a large amount of pageantry on stage, while conveying moral messages (perhaps in simplified form) and some comment on the contemporary situation.

What characterizes Roman drama overall, therefore, is a mixture of these two aspects: presenting themes that concern the life of individuals

or society in Rome on the one hand and the provision of enjoyable entertainment and spectacle on the other hand, in other words, Horace's *prodesse* and *delectare* or *utile* and *dulce* (cf. Hor. *Ars P*. 333-4; 343-4).

While the combination of these two features formed a unified whole at the beginning, in the early imperial period the element of pageant apparently had become so dominant (cf. T 11) that it was no longer possible to have serious content of equal weight and impact; this is where the stories of burlesque entertaining performances and of proper drama started to diverge. Only few genuine full-length performances of traditional serious or light dramatic genres are attested for the imperial period; theatre events seem to have consisted mainly of mimes and pantomimes, dances, musicals or individual celebrated pieces from old plays.

What continued into the imperial period was the use of dramatic plays as a vehicle for the other aspect of Roman drama, the conveying of serious messages. Yet these plays were no longer performed to a mixed audience in big public theatres as a matter of course, but could also be read or recited and were therefore stripped of most elements needed to satisfy a desire for entertainment. This reduction of characteristics in comparison with Republican dramas suggests that dramatic genres that had always been more sober and serious and relied less on effective stage-business had a higher chance of being taken up under the changed circumstances.

While the connection with full-scale performances in the theatre and the corresponding stage-business had become loose, works of those dramatic genres that were taken up in the imperial period continued the developments observable in revivals, new dramatic genres and the few examples of traditional dramatic genres being written at the end of the Republic: plays composed in the imperial period can be understood to have a topical political aspect, which is no longer supportive as in the early days of Roman drama, but critical instead. Even under changed conditions for production and reception Roman drama remained a literary genre that was rooted in Roman society and engaged with issues concerning it.

I 10. Reception and transmission

Originally, in Republican Rome (as in classical Greece) dramas were typically composed for a single performance at a particular festival; however, the organization of the theatre business was different. It is thought that in Republican Rome the dramatic script remained in the possession of the theatre company, which enabled them to put it on again (possibly in adapted form) if there was demand. This might be the case soon after the original performance if a so-called *instauratio* was deemed necessary, i.e. the repetition of a festival as a whole or in part when a

religious mistake had been noted (or caused or alleged for particular reasons).

Apparently, an awareness of the early dramatists as 'classics' was developing around the middle of the second century BCE; and this date coincides with the beginnings of philological, literary-historical and editorial activity at Rome. From this period onwards there seems to have been an interest in revival performances of old plays. An indication of the possibility of revivals can perhaps be seen already in the fact that Terence's prologues, in contrast to those of Plautus, highlight the novelty of the plays. Clear proof of revivals follows for the middle of the second century BCE: the extant prologue to Plautus' *Casina* belongs to a revival performance about a generation after the play's first performance; according to this text audiences asked for performances of the popular plays of 'old poets' (cf. T 9). An increasing prominence of revivals around the middle of the second century BCE would agree with the dates for revivals of Terence's comedies, which can be inferred from details given in the surviving production notices.

More information on a flourishing culture of revivals is available for the time of Cicero. Those revivals seem to have concentrated on a limited canon of established writers, or, in other words, contributed to setting it up; for all identifiable revivals concern plays of those poets who came to be regarded as the great Republican tragic and comic playwrights, and those plays for which revivals are known or inferred are those that are cited or referred to most frequently in Cicero and other writers of the period.

By then changes in the audience's reception of dramas seem to have occurred: if one is to believe intellectuals of the middle to late Republic, and also in view of the dramatic genres produced, audiences apparently preferred increasingly impressive staging, stunning effects, violent utterances and actions, magnificent costumes and elaborate stage properties over meaningful dialogue (cf. T 11). Further, even though plays were originally free of direct comments on contemporary events, it seems to have become common practice by Cicero's time to read allusions to the contemporary situation into old plays, on the part of organizing magistrates, actors or audiences, and possibly to exploit the occasion as a whole for political statements (cf. T 10).

Initially, dramatic scripts would have been used by the respective theatre companies, but not have been generally available. Distribution was only facilitated in the second century BCE, when revivals also started. For when scholars first approached questions of literary history in the second half of the second century BCE, they obviously had access to written texts. Hence the beginning of reading dramatic scripts coincides with the beginning of philological work on them, which led to an appreciation of

the 'literary' potential of drama. Scholars discussed issues such as establishing a canon of major writers in any one dramatic genre, the genuineness of plays transmitted under one playwright's name, the chronology of poets or principles of translation (cf. T 4-6; 15; D 9). Cicero went beyond philological questions: he also voiced his assessment of poets and discussed the contents of plays, the ways of presentation and the relevance to present-day audiences.

In the area of literature, early drama, particularly tragedy and comedy, started to exert an influence on other poetic genres, as the works of Catullus, Lucretius and Vergil, for instance, demonstrate. In Horace's *Ars poetica* drama is the main example used to exemplify a variety of literary techniques and principles. Quintilian includes an assessment of Roman dramatists up to his time in his overview of literature (cf. T 6) and makes extensive use of comparisons between orators and actors in order to illustrate what is required of orators and what they should avoid. By then the dramatic scripts of some playwrights had become standard texts in schools.

The works of those authors that continued to be read were transmitted and preserved. All six plays of Terence survive; and for Plautus twenty-one plays that were singled out as genuine by scholars of the first century BCE are extant, while other plays, which may or may not be genuine, have only been transmitted in fragments or have been lost. For Seneca too all known plays survive, supplemented by two possibly spurious ones.

The works of other poets however, who apparently failed to win lasting interest and a sustained readership, were not transmitted beyond a certain point in time; all that remains therefore are bits and pieces quoted by later Latin writers. Some fragments survive in the literary tradition, in authors such as Cicero or the Author to Herennius, who quote fragments in their own texts when they want to make a point or discuss the contents of a passage, the behaviour of a character or the plot of a play; others verses survive in grammarians, scholiasts and commentators, who quote individual lines to illustrate unusual words, certain grammatical forms or tropes.

Reception beyond antiquity naturally focuses on the completely surviving plays by Plautus, Terence and Seneca, who have exerted an enormous influence on later poets since the Middle Ages, particularly during the Renaissance. Terence was widely read in schools from antiquity onwards; his dramas were preferred over those of Plautus due to their greater restraint, humane attitude and more elegant Latin. After the complete works of Plautus were rediscovered in the fifteenth century, his comedies were performed, and attempts at supplementing missing scenes were made. Seneca continued to be mentioned (and therefore read) by other writers from the start, but his dramatic works only gained real

prominence from the fourteenth century onwards and then became an influential model for a pathetic and tragic style. In the early modern period classical plays were a fixed item in the educational syllabus, and schools and universities regularly staged performances of classical plays in the original languages.

Close engagement with ancient dramatic works prompted early humanist scholars in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries (with times varying in the different European countries) not only to produce commentaries and translations into vernacular languages, but also to compose their own plays, originally still written in Latin, on the model of these exemplars in classical Latin. The Italian statesman and writer Albertino Mussato (1261-1329), for instance, produced a commentary on Seneca's tragedies and wrote one of the first Roman-style dramas in the modern period, *Ecerinis* (*c.* 1315). This play deals with an almost contemporary national subject, the fate and actions of the tyrannical ruler Ezzelino III da Romano (1194-1259). It follows the Senecan corpus as a model in theme, style and metre; and the dramatic presentation of contemporary politics and history as well as aspects of dramaturgy are reminiscent of the praetexta *Octavia*. In fact the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia* provided the only surviving model for a dramatic presentation of events from Roman history and became the typological ancestor of all history plays and even the thematic model for a number of later dramas and operas on Nero. One of the first history plays in England was Matthew Gwinne's (*c.* 1558-1627) *Nero* (1603), a university drama and a 'tragoedia nova' written in Latin (cf. N 3). The most famous version of the topic was to be the Italian opera *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642/3; libretto by Giovanni Francesco Busenello [1598-1659] and music attributed to Claudio Monteverdi [1567-1643]).

What has been called the first regular comedy in English, Nicholas Udall's *Roister Doister* (1552), was modelled on the structure of Roman comedy and of two plays by Plautus and Terence, *Miles gloriosus* and *Eunuchus*, in particular (cf. N 1). Well-known other adaptations of famous Plautine and Terentian comedies include in Italy Lodovico Ariosto's (1474-1533) *La Cassaria* (1508/1531) and *I suppositi* (1509/28-1531), in France Jean de Rotrou's (1609-1650) *Les Ménechmes* (1636) as well as Molière's (1622-1673) *L'Avare ou l'École du mensonge* (1668), in England Charles Sedley's (1639-1701) *Bellamira; or: The Mistress* (1687; modelled on Terence's *Eunuchus*), John Dryden's (1631-1700) *Amphitryon; or The Two Sosias* (1690; cf. N 4), Henry Fielding's (1707-1754) *The Miser* (1733; 'A Comedy. Taken from Plautus and Molière') and *The Fathers: or, The Good-Natur'd Man* (1778; modelled on Terence's *Adelphoe*) and in the United States Thornton Wilder's (1897-1975) *The Woman of Andros* (1930). This novel by Thornton Wilder demonstrates, just as the works

Kassandra (1983) and *Medea: Stimmen* (1996) by the German novelist Christa Wolf (b. 1929) or the British writer Tony Harrison's (b. 1937) *Medea: a sex-war opera* (1985; cf. N 5), that poetic adaptation of classical dramatic plots with obvious references to Greek and/or Roman models continues to the present day.

Apart from those works that refer back directly to one or two specific classical plays by their titles and/or plots, there are numerous plays, especially from the early modern period, that take up individual structural elements, motifs and characters from ancient dramas, such as some of Shakespeare's plays (cf. N 2).
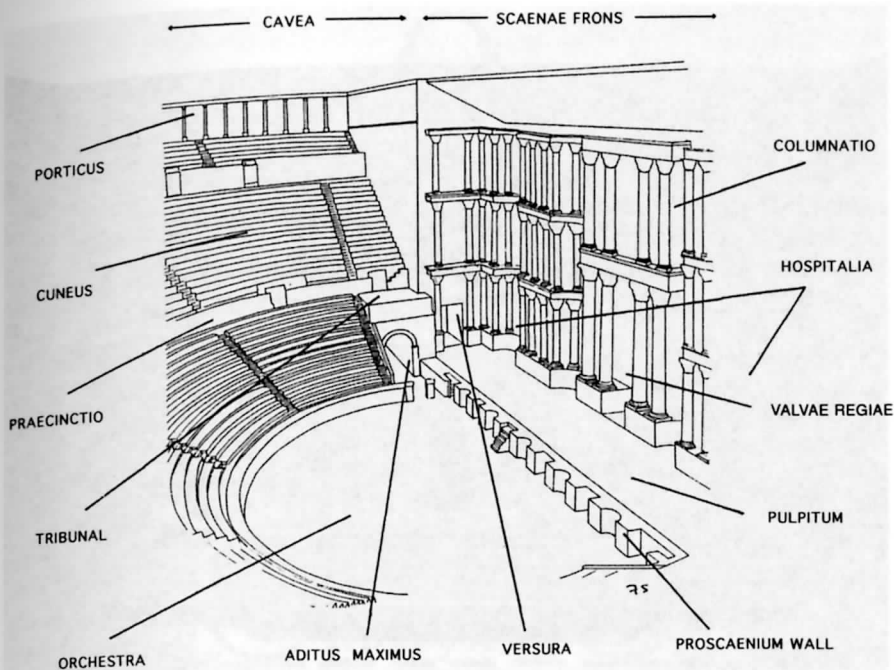
Fig. 1. Arrangement of the parts of a Roman theatre and their terminology.
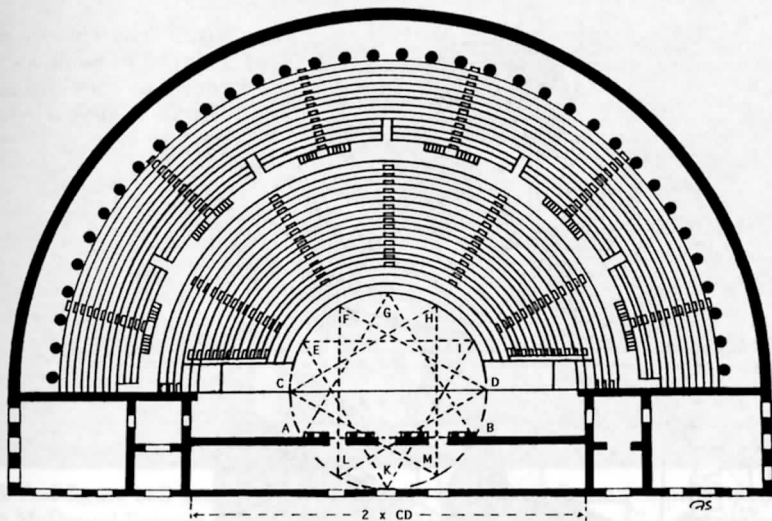
Fig. 2. Plan of a Roman theatre according to Vitruvius.
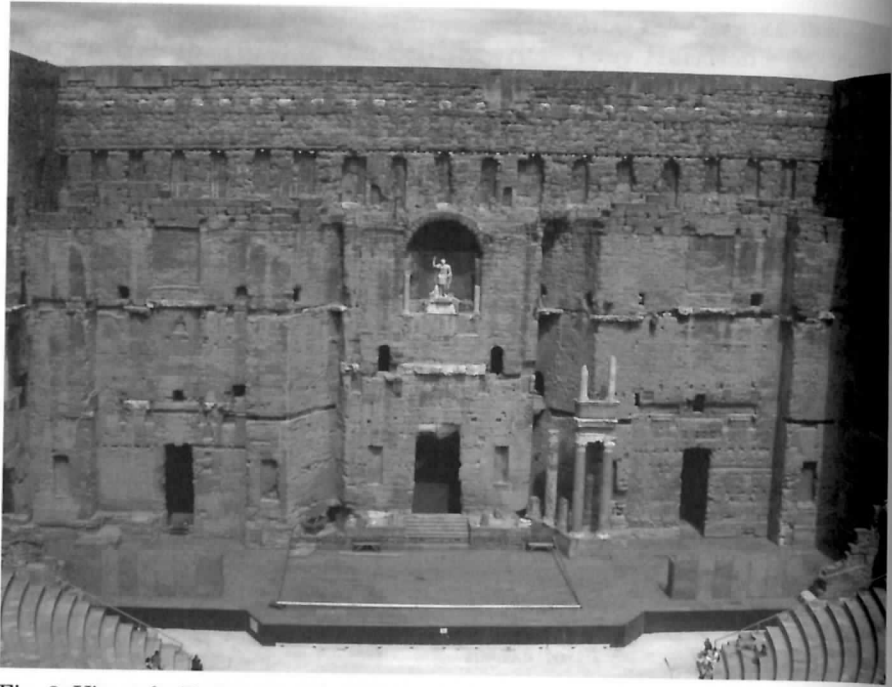
Fig. 3. View of a Roman theatre: the late Augustan theatre in Arausio (Orange, France).
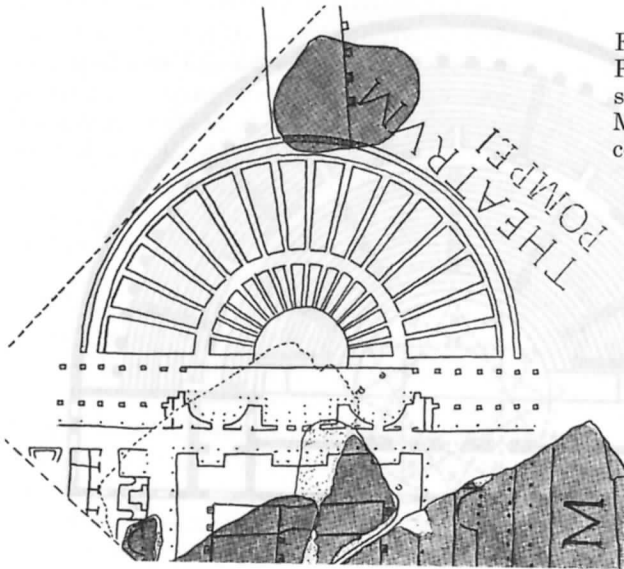
Fig. 4. The Theatre of Pompey in Rome as shown on the Severan Marble Plan (early third century CE).

Fig. 5. Plan of the Theatre
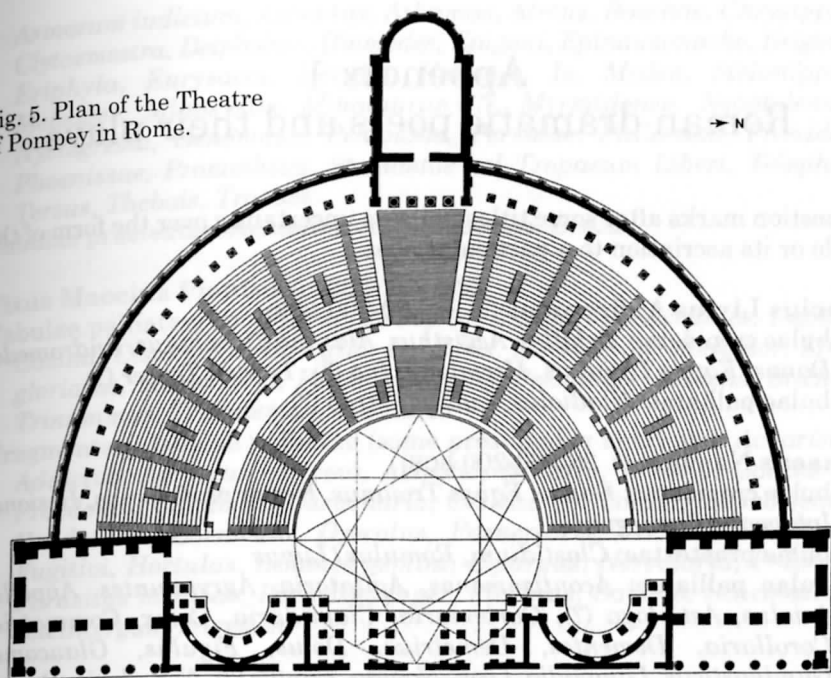of Pompey in Rome.

Fig. 6. Red-figure bell-krater, showing a scene from South Italian comedy; attributed to the McDaniel Painter, made in Puglia, 380-370 BCE (height: 37.4 cm; diameter: 39.4 cm): British Museum London (reg. no. GR 1849.6-20.13; Vase F 151).

ROMAN DRAMA

A Reader

Gesine Manuwald

Duckworth